

To the EDITOR of THE GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE.

Mr. URBAN,

April 28, 1793

AS you have annexed to your Magazine for MARCH * the Resolutions of the Committee of the Crown and Anchor Association, respecting Mr. THOMAS LAW, I rely upon your Candor for the insertion of that Letter which formed the ground of their proceedings; and am

Yours, &c. VINDE X.

A L E T T E R

T O

Mr. REEVES, CHAIRMAN of the Association for preserving Liberty and Property.

By THOMAS LAW, Esq.
One of the Committee of that Society.

* GENTLEMEN,

Dec. 17, 1792.

I Feel it incumbent upon me to assign to you the reasons which have influenced me to absent myself from the Subcommittee of Correspondence; and in explanation of my conduct, I shall briefly recapitulate my motives for first uniting with your As-

* We take the earliest opportunity of inserting this Letter at the End of our Magazine for MAY, in the same situation as the Resolutions appeared. EDIT.

sociation, as well as my proceedings as a Member of the enlarged Committee.

“ I had just obtained *security of property* to the natives of Bengal, Bahar, and Benares, by a fixation of land-tax, and an abolition of all internal impositions, or, to use words of authority, “ A new “ Constitution had been announced to many millions of the Asiatic “ subjects of Great Britain,” and I was rejoicing in this happy issue of my exertions, when I perused your advertisement, wherein you avowed yourselves to be “ private men unconnected with any “ party or description of persons at home, taking no concern in “ struggles at this moment making abroad, but most seriously “ anxious to preserve the true liberty and unexampled prosperity “ we happily enjoy in this kingdom.” My heart immediately informed me that I could zealously and firmly co-operate in such a cause, and with such independency; and I accordingly subscribed my name.

“ Upon the first day that I became a member of the above-mentioned Committee, when the suppression of inflammatory publications was introduced as our primary project, I recommended, as a previous measure, the counteraction of their effects by cheap pamphlets, and also the purport of the following extract from an Act of the Assembly of Virginia to corroborate my argument:— “ That it is time enough for the rightful purposes of Civil Government, for its officers to interfere, when principles break out “ into overt-acts against peace and good order; and that TRUTH “ is great and will prevail, if left to herself; that she is the proper “ and sufficient antagonist to ERROR, and has nothing to fear “ from the conflict, unless by human interposition disarmed of “ her natural weapons, free argument and debate; Errors ceasing “ to be dangerous, when it is permitted freely to contradict “ them.”

“ The Gentlemen of the Committee approved of my conduct, and I had the pleasure to see mildness the feature of our deliberations that day; but shortly after this, perceiving with regret, a deviation from your original profession, “ to take no concerns in

“ the

"the struggles abroad," I felt myself compelled to deliver the following opinion in writing:

"When I had the the honour to receive a Letter from the Secretary of this Society, I replied, 'That, without adverting to the politics of other countries, I should be happy to co-operate for preserving liberty and property against Republicans and Levellers in my own.'

"I conceived it to be the express intention of the enlarged Committee to counteract by cheap publications, the delusive doctrines of seditious libellers; I used the language of moderation the first day, and had the satisfaction to be elected, by strangers to me, for one of the Sub-Committee; but, as we have lately introduced animadversions upon the French, I feel it incumbent upon me to dissent therefrom.

"We are looked up to as the germ of other Associations; and it is not our duty, I trust, to revive national antipathies, which have so long distracted France and Great Britain. The situation of the old government of France bears no analogy to that of Great Britain; *we* have not a Bastile to destroy—*we* have not a trial by jury to establish.—The people of Great Britain are, I hope, conscious of the blessings of a free government, and are aware *how very little they have to gain, and how very much to lose by any Revolution.*

"If any emissaries are attempting to alienate the attachment of his Majesty's subjects in this country, I will cordially unite in their detection and apprehension, but I cannot coincide with the Gentlemen of this Committee, in censuring the conduct of any other Government, let it be ever so erroneous, or in accusing it of trying to subvert our Constitution, as it may complain to our Government of such attacks, and call upon us for proof.

"I move therefore that all our reasonings, and that all our exertions, shall be directed against any false doctrines, and against all seditious words, writings, and actions whatsoever, and by

"whomsoever, and that we do not introduce the French, unless
 "to shew their arguments and measures cannot be applied to
 "us.

(Signed,)

"T. L."

"Upon this occasion I was gratified by seeing the Committee
 erase those animadversions which they had previously resolved
 upon, because deliberation shewed them to be unfounded.

"The moderation of our measures for a few days afterwards af-
 forded me the sincerest satisfaction; but I felt equal surprise and
 regret, when the following proceedings took place on the 11th
 instant.

"A Committee of Correspondence to be nominated, to consist
 "of five members.

"1st, This Committee may do immediately whatever is sug-
 gested by letters, or prepare for the General Committee.

"2dly, To apply to Government to direct the Solicitor of the
 Treasury to attend to the suggestions of this Society. This to
 be done by the Chairman and the Attorney-General."

"Having been present when anonymous letters were received,
 darkly accusing some of the first characters in this kingdom, and
 even his Majesty's officers, which when conveyed to Government
 must necessarily excite alarm and distrust, and considering that in-
 dividuals, however innocent, had no means of refuting clandestine
 calumnies; I proposed "That the Committee of Five be directed to
 burn all anonymous letters accusing individuals;" but this pro-
 position was suppressed by carrying the previous question against it.

"As I deemed myself responsible for my conduct to the Association
 at large, I requested the President to record the above proceeding,
 but he refused. I next stated to the Committee that "since every
 motion and every voting formed part of our proceedings, I
 hoped the foregoing would be entered," but, it being put to the
 vote, it was negatived.

"In

"In this predicament I am necessitated to enumerate these particulars in this letter, that reference may be had to it, should any one attribute inconsistency to me, or charge me with a dereliction of principle. I am sincerely attached to my Sovereign and the Constitution of this Government, and I am ready to assist in bringing any traitor to punishment; but I should condemn myself as a false friend to all, if I acted in any measure which tended in my opinion to frustrate the intention of its promoters, and to alienate public affection.

"I have asked myself, "Whether I should do unto others, as I would they should do unto me," by admitting and perusing anonymous letters?—Whether confidence, that band of harmony in society, must not be broken by such a measure? Whether suspicion has not caused horrid assassinations and convulsions?—Whether any kind of inquisitorial body does not irritate to commotions? In short, my conscience has admonished me, that my love of my country, and my desire of its tranquillity, all prohibit concealment.

"It will be urged, that it is not necessary to act upon the information of nameless writers. Why then, I ask, shall we wound our minds with baleful impressions, by perusing these letters? And why let men be sunk in estimation, whom we might otherwise admire?—To be accused, and the person receiving the accusation, are *both* injured by an anonymous letter, if any impression is made by it; every tribunal in this country requires the impeacher to confront the person arraigned, without which we could not boast that we lived "*rara temporum felicitate ubi licet sentire quod velis et dicere quod sentias.*" But why do I expatiate on this head? I trust that you cannot but approve the principle which determines me to absent myself, however falsely delicate you may consider this determination.

"I will cheerfully attend the enlarged Committee, whenever summoned; and permit me to add, that if any treasonable plots existed to my knowledge, which required *peculiar efforts*, I should never withdraw myself from any situation, however irksome, dangerous,

gerous, or even opprobrious, wherein I could be of the least service to my country.

"I remain, Gentlemen,

Your most obedient humble servant,

THOMAS LAW.

N^o 16, *Weymouth-street.*"

I understand, Mr. Urban, that the Chairman acknowledged with thanks the receipt of the preceding Letter, and, in the name of the Committee, desired Mr. Law's attendance, whenever it might be convenient. For this answer Mr. Law returned his acknowledgments, declining however the invitation, "as he differed very much "from several of the Committee upon fundamental principles."

Having now stated what passed between Mr. Law and the Committee, I would ask Mr. Reeves, what necessity there was for dismissing Mr. Law, after he had signified his intention, and actually absented himself from the Board? The motive alledged by him could not be the real one, as an absentee was incapable "of "disturbing the harmony of a Society, which required an entire "confidence in its members." Had not Mr. Law shewn that he was a zealous friend to his King and Country, by coming forward and assisting the Association by every means in his power? Can then Mr. Reeves, or any member of the Association, entertain a doubt of Mr. Law's being actuated by a Principle of Honor, and that only, in his dissent from them? and therefore, even supposing him under an error, ought not they to have shewn greater tenderness to the scruples of a conscientious mind? Mr. Law did by no means stand single in his opinion. It has been since very ably supported; and though an inquisitorial power might, perhaps, be
safely

safely entrusted in the hands of Mr. Reeves and his Association, yet the Principle is undoubtedly dangerous, and contrary to the spirit of our Constitution.

Another reason assigned by the Committee, for their passing the Resolution respecting Mr. Law, is, "because he published in a common Newspaper what related to their meetings." In answer to this I must observe, that the Committee of Secrecy, by refusing in a most unprecedented manner to enter Mr. Law's proposals on their minutes, left him no other means of justification. He had returned from India with a character universally respected; it was very generally known that he was a Member, and also an active one, of the Crown and Anchor Association: he therefore owed it to his own character to declare those reasons, which had reluctantly compelled him to withdraw himself from their Committee.

From this impartial review of the difference between Mr. T. Law and the Crown and Anchor Association, I think every one who reads it must be convinced, that the disgrace which they have so industriously but ineffectually endeavoured to affix upon Mr. Law's character does not fall upon him, but rather upon those who struck his name out of the Committee.

I am, Mr. URBAN,

Yours, &c.

V I N D E X.



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